

**Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England on HB 5044, the Governor's Budget**  
**Susan L Yolen, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy**  
**Appropriations Committee, February 19, 2016**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to express the support of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England for the programs, services and advocacy of our state's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Planned Parenthood is the state's largest provider of family planning and reproductive health care, serving over 65,000 women and men at 17 health centers across Connecticut.

Forty three years ago, the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was created by the General Assembly. When the PCSW was created, women's rights were being broadened at every turn: Title IX was created in 1973, the year that also brought us the legalization of abortion. On March 15 of that year, our General Assembly ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, making Connecticut one of the 35 states declaring women to be equal.

The statutory mandate of the PCSW is as inspiring as the era when it was created: "To insure that all women of the state are healthy, safe, achieve educational success, are economically self-sufficient, and free from discrimination." The PCSW was empowered to recommend to the General Assembly and Governor, policies and programs to foster progress in achieving these agreed-upon aims, which were described as "*quality of life desired results*."

As in past years, Planned Parenthood would again like to attest to the importance of the work and funding of our PCSW. Women advocate, organize and demonstrate in our own interests everywhere across the globe. Ultimately, however, we all need *government* that engages, responds, and delivers the policies that formally, legally and permanently affirm our status.

Our PCSW has a legislative agenda that is ambitious and broadly focused on issues ranging from pay equity to prevention of sexual assault and misconduct on campus; from funding domestic violence programs to insuring access to comprehensive sexual health education. The PCSW convened the task force to study a family and medical leave insurance program that we hope will finally become a reality this session and, have immeasurable value to the women who struggle to work while caring for both the young and old in their families.

Along with others increasingly concerned about how the massive consolidation of hospital systems may impact women's health care, PCSW reviews and speaks out when such mergers threaten community-based reproductive health services, including obstetrics, which is being eliminated from local hospitals, forcing patients, regardless of income or access to transportation, to travel in order to deliver a baby.

Our modest investment in the PCSW reaffirms our state's commitment to policies that contribute to equal status, equal access and equal rights for all women. By funding the PCSW, you say that Connecticut values women; that in Connecticut, women must not only hold elected office, but must also serve in appointed positions and consulted on policies that impact them. Connecticut attests to this by funding a PERMANENT agency *within government empowered to speak the truth of women's lived experience*. This is a source of pride to those of us who have had the privilege of collaborating with and working for the PCSW over the years.

Thank you for providing the PCSW with the budgetary support necessary to continue its unique and vital role.

